

by **Nalin de Silva**

Until recently many people, especially the English speaking variety did not believe that the west would go against Sri Lanka. When the

concerned with breaking American Law. For example Rudrakumaran has no difficulty in staying in USA as long as he abides the USA law. In other words anybody can be engaged in work to topple a foreign government using

a few people are dying in these camps on a daily basis as they do in any American town with a population of nearly three hundred thousand people. If Blake or any other bloke could give an example of a town or downtown in

camps. Has Blake heard of other such camps in the entire world? Incidentally why is USA silent on IDPs in Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries?

The west may not be against Sri Lanka as such, but the westerners are against this government and would try to use any opportunity that comes in their way to get rid of the government if possible. Then we have to find out whether there is any reason for the west to be against the government. The relevant question as to why the west supports Tamil racism has also to be answered in the process. We have to remember that neither in 1971 nor in 1987 did the west speak against the government of Sri Lanka when the JVP was defeated by the then governments. In effect the west did not want to support the JVP then. Why did the west protect the governments against the JVP but not the present government against the LTTE. The present victory over the LTTE is in spite of the

colonialism and would like to pontificate to “ignoramus” such as us that we should not ignore the economic background of the entire Tamil problem. In any event there is no so called cultural determinism in our theories unlike in the case of some western theorists who would try to reduce everything to economics. These people claiming to be anti neo colonialists are happy with western theories and still go behind western concepts that have been able to divert our attention from some of the main problems associated with colonialism. If these people think that by supporting the LTTE the west can exploit any oil that may be found in the northern areas of the country and other resources in the east coast then they are mistaken. Why did the British support the English speaking Tamils over the English speaking Sinhhalas early in the twentieth century when their allegiance to the British was not different from that of the Sinhala counterparts? Even culturally these two groups were not different but the British never tolerated the Sinhhalas especially the Sinhala Buddhists and always wanted the Tamil leaders to be the leaders of the entire country. One could say that this was the general policy of the British throughout the world and they had always supported the minority against the majority.

However, it is not a general theory that could be applied in the case of Sri Lanka as it was the Sinhala Buddhists who have challenged the British from 1817 continuously up to the present time. Though there may have been some Sinhala leaders who were willing to serve the British the Sinhala people in general have opposed the British unlike the ethnic communities. In this regard we should not forget the reports sent by the British governors to the colonial secretary complaining of the “undue” influence the Bhikkhus had over the Sinhala Buddhists. The British were scared of the Bhikkhus more than anybody else including the so called working class and it was not for economic reasons that the British did not like the Bhikkhus. The fact that our ancestors had more wisdom than some of the patriotic professors who have entered the nationalist struggle on the eve of their retirement from the university is shown by the clauses that the former had insisted to be included in the Sinhala British agreement of 1815. The then Sinhala leaders had wanted the British to promise that the latter undertook to protect and nourish what is referred to as Buddhagama and Devalegama. It should be clear even to a lately waken up patriotic professor that this clause had more cultural connotations than those economic. There are some anti colonialists who argue that the Sinhala leaders betrayed the nation by signing the agreement. However, it is propaganda of the British and British trained historians who wanted the Sinhala people to be leaderless other than those so called leaders trained by the British. Sinhala historians such as Prof. Tennakone Vimalananda had a different interpretation all together.

(To be continued)

Is the west against Sri Lanka?

American ambassadors and the UK high commissioners not to mention the others who represent their respective countries in the west began openly to criticise the Sri Lanka government at first they could not believe that the westerners had turned against Sri Lanka. However, gradually they had no alternative but to believe what they were hearing, and assumed that the west is against Sri Lanka.

However is the west against Sri Lanka or is it against this government? If the President of the country was either Chandrika Kumaratunga or Ranil Wickremesinghe would the west behave the way they do now? It is very unlikely going by the records of what has happened during the period from 1995 to 2005. Those days the American ambassadors UK High Commissioners and special envoys from UK, USA, Norway and Sweden thought that Colombo was their backyard and the President of Sri Lanka was their housemaid and the leader of the UNP their houseboy. They, I mean the western boys behaved as if they were cowboys in the American west with no regard for the sovereignty of Sri Lanka.

It is now known that until the last moment the west had tried to “free” Prabhakaran and the other terrorist leaders and Prabhakaran also had had hopes the west would come to rescue the terrorists. Apparently KP, the international representative of the terrorists had come to know very late that there was no hope of a rescue team from the west coming to Killinochchiya or Medawachchiya according to Ravi Karunanayake, and informed Prabhakaran accordingly. Having assisted the terrorists and Tamil racists from the third decade of the nineteenth century the British and the rest of the west have now decided to hang on to the problem of “God sent” IDPs. For example Mr. Blake the former USA ambassador in Sri Lanka is busy trying to teach Sri Lanka a lesson or two on terrorism, American Law and IDPs. He is not guided by action against terrorism, though his government makes a big fuss over international terrorism, but is merely



Internally displaced ethnic Tamil civilians wave to passersby at Manik Farm, a camp for the internally displaced in Vavuniya, about 230 Kilometers (144 miles) northeast of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2009. (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena)

terror provided he does not break the American Law. After all America has a history of toppling democratically elected governments as recognised even by the western criteria and all those officers involved would not have broken the American Law. The American history is such that one wanders whether toppling governments that the American government does not like is in accordance with the American Law.

It is clear that given a half chance the west would send forces to Sri Lanka to liberate the IDPs from the so called interment camps. It is true that

North American parlance, where people are not dying in spite of very high medical standards we would give him or her a free air ticket to visit the IDP camps. The medical standards in the camps may not be up to American downtown standards but the Sri Lankan government has provided meals and health facilities in addition to educational facilities to the people in the camps that would keep them alive. In addition the Sri Lankan government has provided facilities for students to sit for the Grade Five Scholarship examination and the GCE (Advanced Level) examination in the

western countries supporting the LTTE and Tamil racism. As we have shown right throughout the British and then the rest of the west have continued to support Tamil racism from the third decade of the nineteenth century.

There are some Sinhala nationalists including professors who think that the west is doing all these to exploit us economically. These people think of the present western policy as neo colonialism and would believe that the west is only after the wealth of our countries. They stick to some old fashioned theories on colonialism and neo

Electoral politics and Rajapaksa phenomenon



by **Srinath Fernando**

It would be pertinent to begin this article with the outcome of the 1977 General Election where voter turnout was 85 percent which is a record in the electoral politics of Sri Lanka. The motive for people to participate in the election could be attributed to the severe economic problems confronted by the population during that dark era. It was merely to protest against the SLFP-led coalition government under late Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike. The election was epoch making and that JRJ got a massive mandate and SLFP was reduced to only 9 seats. JRJ turned around the economy and there are still visible concrete structures to feel the effect of the policies adopted by JRJ in the immediate aftermath of the general election of 1977. The massive mandate allowed him to consolidate his power base by hurriedly introducing a new constitution. This very constitution, which some called as ‘grotesque’ (*bahubutha*), enabled the President Mahinda Rajapaksa to lead the war effort successfully. If it had been a Westminster style constitution, the war effort would have been in jeopardy immediately after its commencement.

We have a classic case study in our history and it centres on the 1945 General Election in Britain. The late Prime Minister Winston Churchill was the most popular Prime Minister in the British history and his approval ratings had never been below 80 percent. But how did he lose the election after a massive victory over Nazi Germany, where he led an Alliance of the Willing to dislodge Hitler and the Nazi political apparatus. Most political commentators were of the view that Churchill would gain a comfortable majority and would lead Conservatives to victory but election turned out to be a greatest ever defeat. Critics believe that the same qualities and political acumen which drove

him to the War Victory were ill-suited to domestic politics. There was also another school of thought that soon after the war the party politics came to the fore and Churchill could not master enough strength to meet that challenges and his importance as a leader was made redundant. Conservatives also relied heavily on the personality of Churchill and it fell upon his shoulder to carry the campaign himself. British voters were not subject to emotional appeal but logic, performance and persuasions.

President Rajapaksa could well be the most popular politician as far as current circumstances are concerned. It would be difficult to predict voter turnout at the next Presidential/ General Election and the percentage would never reach the level at 1977 general election. Defeat of the LTTE is still fresh in the minds of the people and the longer he delays election, the more his popularity would be adversely affected. Economic performance has not been up to any acceptable level and if President Rajapaksa can prune his expenditure by reducing the size of massive cabinet of ministers would be a welcome step. He needs to introduce a Code of Conduct for his cabinet of ministers and financial stringency is of utmost importance. IMF loan, yet another feather in Rajapaksa’s cap, was to stabilise the depleting foreign exchange reserves. President must now make use of this opportunity to re-structure the economy by collecting revenue and improving the national productivity. This however, under the existing world conditions, is no mean task. Creating more employment opportunities is the mirror image of the economic progress. Enlarging the public sector by recruiting more public sector employees would further erode his economic stability. All factors of the economy have a direct bearing on the electoral performance as such a coherent economic recovery could well keep him in power till his term ends. The million dollar

question is: Would he be able to perform the miracle? Do the people around him have the vision for that? Could people, through public opinion, be able to persuade the President to change his course?

Campaign against political dissent and suppression of media freedom seem to have had a devastating effect on the free flow of ideas and even constructive criticism by moderates seems to have gone into obscurity. The government has to get its act together as regards its foreign policy. Emotional outbursts would only antagonise otherwise friendly countries. We cannot blame Western countries for being Pro-LTTE or a Pro-Separatist lobby. We need to articulate our own strategies to counter adverse propaganda overseas. In the absence of our own views/counter views, the views available through separatist lobby would gain currency. As such, a coherent plan for public diplomacy and lobbying effort must be re-evaluated and re-structured to meet the changing circumstances.

Under the Rajapaksa administration there have been many causes which the Opposition has not yet been able to capitalise on starting from the non-fulfilment of the promises in the *Mahinda Chinthanaya* and other actions against the miscreants within the government. UNP needs a massive restructuring as far as propaganda is concerned and it needs to woo the Buddhist majority and must consolidate the party position at the grass-roots level. This would be a Herculean task in the face of the Rajapaksa Phenomenon. Being the single largest political party the UNP needs to form a grand alliance which might well have a common symbol sans the trunk. This would allow UNP to muster the JVP’s support as well.

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